

NComputing Sharpens Leading European Sawmill's IT Systems

Based in Creuzburg, Germany, Pollmeier is the global market leader in high-quality beech lumber. Customers in 60 countries purchase over 500,000 cubic meters of Pollmeier lumber annually. The lumber is processed at state-of-the-art sawmills that use cutting-edge systems and technology. Computers are needed in the facility for machinery monitoring, quality assurance, process visualization, and access to their SAP software.

The Challenge

Even though the factory is high-tech, the operating conditions inside the factory are still challenging for the computing equipment needed to run the facility.

The facility generates saw dust that can jam up computing equipment like disk drives and fans. The movement of timber and heavy machinery creates continuous vibrations that can dramatically shorten computer life. The factory also has large temperature swings as the lumber moves through the production line. The factory temperature can range from 0° to 45° Celsius (32° to 113° Fahrenheit).

"High availability PCs are critical to the smooth operation of our factories," said Sven Raab, IT administrator for Pollmeier in Creuzberg, "but we needed a more cost-effective, lower maintenance solution."

In order to handle these stresses, "industrial" grade PCs had to be deployed. The industrial PCs were housed in special protective cases which were expensive, difficult to access and required a lot of space. In addition, dust filters on the cases required constant replacement. As a result, the total cost for each industrial PC and cover was €2,050 (U.S. \$ 2,650).



Saw dust damages PCs so industrial PCs with protective casings were required



The Pollmeier sawmill production floor experiences temperature extremes and intense vibration

The Solution

Pollmeier turned to NComputing to meet the computing challenges in the sawmills. NComputing is the market leader in shared computing. Its technology enables a single PC (located centrally) to be shared by multiple remote users at the same time. For example, Pollmeier deployed a small number of host PCs in their central administration building that power NComputing L Series access terminals located throughout the factory. The solid state NComputing terminals are small, rugged and can handle the environmental challenges posed by the harsh production floor at Pollmeier. Since the terminals have no fans, sawdust is no longer a problem and the need to replace filters has been eliminated. Finally, with a Mean-Time-Between-Failure (MTBF) of over 350,000 hours (7 times longer than a PC), Pollmeier can enjoy unmatched reliability.

Pollmeier also deployed the NControl management software to centrally administer their terminals via remote control, minimizing IT staff trips into the factory.



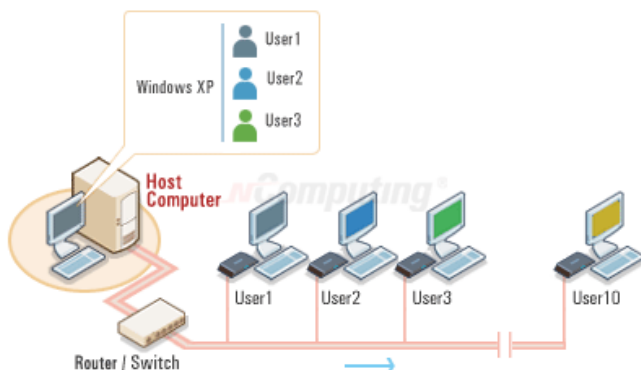
Pollmeier used small NComputing L Series access terminals to deliver reliable computing in the factory

How Does It Work?

Factory users connect their peripherals (keyboard, mouse, monitor, speakers) to a small NComputing L Series access terminal. For stations with touch screen interfaces, NComputing terminals are available with a special serial interface for these particular monitors.



The L Series terminal connects to a host PC over standard Ethernet. Since the network is used to transmit the signals between the host PC and the terminal, the host PC can be located in an office or data center environment away from the harsh factory surroundings. The host PC runs the NComputing terminal services software which enables each user to connect to a unique, individual session from their access terminal.



Multiple L Series access terminals can connect back to a single host PC over Ethernet

The entire solution is compatible with standard PC applications and Ethernet networking so IT staff and end users do not require special training. In fact, just a one page sheet was needed to train the factory users. Furthermore, the terminals are very easy to setup and maintain saving IT staff even more time.

The Results

Pollmeier deployed L Series access terminals in its Creuzburg factory and has been very pleased with the solution. The key benefit is the 30% reduction in PC hardware costs because the solution eliminated the need for specialized industrial PCs and protective cases. In addition to the cost savings, Pollmeier also realized several operational benefits.



Host PCs are housed in the administration building

First, the IT staff does not have to waste time constantly replacing dirty filters because the protective cases and filters have been eliminated.

Second, PC downtime has been nearly eliminated because the host PC is in a dust-free, vibration-free, temperature-controlled location (in the administration building).

Finally, in case a host PC has a problem, the IT staff can maintain it from within the administration building which is quicker and easier to access. The NControl management software enables IT administrators to remotely manage the terminals or take over a user session (for monitoring or training purposes). This reduces trips to the factory floor and enables quick resolution of software-related questions.

"The L200 is a real alternative to industrial PCs for use in rough industrial environments. These devices are rock solid and just work!" commented Sven Raab.

Based on the positive results at its Creuzburg facility, Pollmeier has decided to equip its other existing and planned factories with NComputing systems as they get built or upgraded.

NComputing is pleased to have brought the simplicity, affordability, and reliability of their solution to Pollmeier. NComputing solutions have been deployed all over the world in manufacturing, call centers, publishing, public access, hospitality, retailing and other business applications. To learn more about how NComputing can help your organization improve computing access, please visit: www.ncomputing.com